

Appl. No. 10/092,577
Amdt. dated May 17, 2004
Reply to Office action of February 17, 2004

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-4. (Withdrawn)

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A process for filtering a feed water comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a tank containing modules of filtering membranes;
- (b) introducing a feed water to the tank to keep the modules immersed in feed-water in the tank;
- (c) withdrawing a filtered permeate from the modules;
- (d) withdrawing a retentate from the tank;
- (e) introducing ~~air bubbles~~ a first gas into the water in the tank in bubbles which rise past the membranes to inhibit fouling of the membranes, ~~the air bubbles also causing a gas to be liberated from the water in the tank;~~ and
- (f) ~~collecting the gas liberated from the water in the tank in step (e) and returning the collected gas to the tank by way of the air bubbles~~ a second gas consisting of gases contained in the bubbles after they have risen past the membranes.

wherein the first gas consists essentially of a mixture of the second gas and air.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 5 wherein the collected first gas includes carbon dioxide in a concentration greater than in air.

Claim 7. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 6 wherein the second gas is 80% or more of the mixture ~~carbon dioxide liberated from the water in the tank is returned to the tank.~~

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Claim 8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the feed water in the tank has scaling tendencies.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) The process of claim ~~6~~ wherein the first gas is provided at a superficial velocity of at least 0.01 m/s and has a concentration of carbon dioxide sufficient to maintain a pH of 8.0 or less in the water in the tank when the feed water has a Langlier Scaling Index of greater than 0.5 before being introduced into the tank.

Claim 10. (Original) The process of claim 7 further comprising the step of adding coagulants to the feed water in the tank.

Claim 11. (Withdrawn)

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 5, wherein some of the ~~gas liberated from the water in the tank in step (e)~~ gases contained in the bubbles after they have risen past the membranes is collected and returned to the tank in step (ef) and some of the ~~gas is~~ gases contained in the bubbles after they have risen past the membranes are vented to the atmosphere.

Claim 13. (New) The process of claim 5 further comprising the steps of drawing a flow of air from the atmosphere into a vacuum induced flow of the second gas to create the first gas.